

PING

Raised on the Web, but Liking a Little Ink



Daniel Rosenbaum for The New York Times

Zines, print magazines generally available only in small quantities, have enjoyed a resurgence among the Web-savvy. Malaka Gharib worked on the next issue of her food zine, *The Runcible Spoon*, at home in Washington.

By [JENNA WORTHAM](#)

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ON a trip to an indie bookstore in Brooklyn in the summer, I came across a curious creation: a small, black-and-white publication that

consisted entirely of snapshots of Lindsay Lohan, known for her movie roles in [“Mean Girls”](#) and [“The Parent Trap,”](#) and, more recently, for her well-publicized courtroom appearances.

This print tribute to Ms. Lohan, called Lindzine, reignited my obsession with zines — mini-magazines that are generally made by hand and are available only in small quantities. It’s a passion I’ve had since my teens, though one I’d neglected in recent years.

I began to hunt for zines, both in small shops and on the Web, and was thrilled to discover a flourishing industry of quirky, clever do-it-yourself publications that touched on almost everything, with topics as varied as local food, art, short fiction, music reviews and comics. My collection expanded from Lindzine to include several more with funkier names like The Bushwick Review, Original Plumbing, Girl Talk Zine, A Girl at Night on the Internet, You Taste Like Nachos and Uptown Problems.

My new discoveries even prompted me to create zines with friends, including one called CandyLand, a celebration of the simple pleasures of summer, and another called Girl

Crush, a collection of women's essays and ruminations about women who have inspired them.

The word "zine" is a shortened form of the term fanzine, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. Fanzines emerged as early as the 1930s among fans of science fiction. Zines also have roots in the informal, underground publications that focused on social and political activism in the '60s. By the '70s, zines were popular on the punk rock circuit. In the '90s, the feminist punk scene known as riot grrrl propelled the medium.

Lately, it seems, the zine is enjoying something of a comeback among the Web-savvy, partly in reaction to the ubiquity of the Internet. Their creators say zines offer a respite from the endless onslaught of tweets, blog posts, I.M.'s, e-mail and other products of digital media.

"There's nothing more joyous than having a little publication in your hands," said Malaka Gharib, a social media coordinator for a nonprofit organization in Washington. In her spare time, she publishes a colorful food zine called The Runcible Spoon with her friend Claire O'Neill.

“It’s a much more tangible feeling than collecting things on a Pinterest board,” she said, referring to a service that lets people save and store interesting links and pictures found on the Web.

Although working on *The Runcible Spoon* is a refreshing change of pace, Ms. Gharib still makes much use of technology to create and distribute the zine, employing software to design each issue, Twitter to attract readers, and Etsy, an online marketplace, to sell the publication.

MOST zines are labors of love, done as side projects and hobbies. The goal isn’t to turn a profit, but rather to capture a cultural moment, which in turn, offers the creators the freedom to explore and experiment.

It’s hard to track exactly how many zines are in circulation at any time. Some are handwritten sheets that are photocopied a few dozen times, stapled and distributed by hand. Others, more upscale, are printed professionally in runs of several hundred and may be sold online.

But Karen Gisonny, a librarian at the New York Public Library who has specialized in collecting

and cataloging periodicals for the last 25 years, said she has seen a resurgence of interest in zines and other D.I.Y. publications.

“We’re seeing a flowering of print,” she said. “There’s definitely been a renaissance in the last 10 years.”

Virtual reality has its limits, it seems. “People are drawn to the experiences of creating and collecting these physical objects,” she said.

The appetite for zines is growing when it has never been easier — or cheaper — to publish content online, thanks to free blogging services like Tumblr, WordPress and Posterous.

A prominent New York blogger who goes by the name David (he wanted only his first name used for this article), decided to make a zine after tiring of the high rate of turnover in online content.

“It’s satisfying to produce something that people can hold and treasure and value partially for its physicality instead of something that gradually disappears,” he said, referring to the way that Web articles and blog posts are often updated with fresh ones after a few hours. In his blog, for example, he critiques album

reviews published by the indie music site [Pitchfork](#). He is writing about writing that appears only on the Web — but his print publication, *The World's First Perfect Zine*, will be something he can actually touch when it comes out next month.

“In 2011, it feels like a rare pleasure to hold up a bunch of pieces of paper that are bound together and read them, instead of reading off a screen,” he added. He says he is printing 500 copies of the zine, a collection of art and prose by people who make a living as musicians or writers. (I’m a contributor in the second group.)

For Barbara Frankie Ryan, 19, a graphic design student in London who recently curated an exhibition of zines at a boutique there called [Tatty Devine](#), the Internet and handcrafted publications exist in tandem. She runs a popular [fashion blog](#) and also makes a series of zines — although she said she wasn’t even aware of the rich history of zine culture when she started creating them in her bedroom at the age of 15.

Instead, she was looking for an outlet for her drawings and innermost musings on popular

culture and romantic crushes. And she wanted to be able to experiment. While Web sites come and go, in another sense the Web is eternal: tidbits can be searched and found when you least want them to be. That can be inhibiting.

“I’m becoming more aware how permanent and accessible things are online,” she said.

Ms. Ryan also said zines have an air of exclusivity: they are like other artifacts that were never intended for mass consumption or distribution, like a scarf knitted by a friend, a sketch or a cassette tape filled with handpicked songs.

“I like the idea that I’ve only made 40 copies, and only 40 people will see it,” she said. “It’s really easy to reveal a lot about yourself, and so this is a way of getting control back, and I find that quite comforting.”